

LA CONFIANZA – WHERE IS GOD IN THIS?



Pedro Perez Portales, his wife Joaquina and their son, Henry (19) in La Conianza.

Why is there so much suffering in the world? Where IS God?!

God is not absent from this world, but insistently present in it. God works mysteriously but also in practical ways i.e. through the eyes, ears and hands of people. God works through us when we take the time to read about situations of injustice, when we join email campaigns, when we advocate or raise awareness howsoever, and when we pray in our own way that justice might prevail.

Our faith, our Christian values should colour the way we relate to all things in life.

Land is a gift from God. It has a sacred essence. Ultimately, we are not owners but merely guardians of it. In Ireland, land has shaped our way of life in a particular way. Land both defines and gives expression to the way those who inhabit it live. It has deep social and cultural implications.

Working in relationship with the earth brings us closer to it and to our own core. It rewards endurance, induces satisfaction, produces hope. For any community rooted in their relationship with the land, to be distanced from it in any way, has a deep affect.

The struggle for land ownership in La Conianza is much more than a struggle for clay and stone. It is a struggle for identity, human dignity, equality, fairness, right relationship, guardianship and love.

Reflection

‘Enough’ stands between misery on the one hand and excess on the other. Living out of a philosophy of ‘enough’ provides security both in times of boom and recession. Greed, and a culture of excess, gives birth to injustice and all sorts of misery. The interdependence of the world we live in means that choosing which philosophy we live out of – ‘more’ or ‘enough’ - has important implications for the lives of others.

- In what way does the La Conianza story reflect the prevalence of a philosophy of ‘more’ over a philosophy of ‘enough’?

- To which philosophy do I subscribe, and do I live practically and authentically out of that philosophy day to day?

Lent: Fasting and Reflection

Fasting is different from dieting. There is a deeper more outward focus to it. It symbolises the space we need to make inside ourselves to be able to really listen for God, to ourselves and to others. Lent is a season that challenges us to make room for those essential things. It symbolises the inner emptiness that only the Divine can fill. It invites change and we can be changed by it.

Jesus of Nazareth did not have a house, any means of transport or any thing he could call his own. He never moved more than 75 miles from his place of origin and only spent 3 years in active ministry. Yet, Christianity today has over 1 billion followers.

In the Gospels, we read about Jesus going up the mountain, pushing out in a boat, and walking into the desert to pray. It was essential to him.

His very essence, his focus, his wellbeing depended on this time alone, in stillness to reflect on his life, re-generate, and find future direction in his mission.

Lent, is a call to us to consider the example of Jesus, step out of the ordinary and into a 'desert' space – time for reflection on self, and self in relation to society and God. *'Be still and know that I am God'* Psalm 46:10.

God in all Things

There are many wonderful spiritual traditions within the Catholic Church. The spirituality of St. Ignatius, that of finding the Kingdom of God in the everyday experiences and encounters of life, is one that speaks strongly and practically to young people. To be in touch with your own deepest self is to be in tune with the presence of God within. Your deepest desires meet God's deepest desires for you. It is the path to authentic living, and ultimately to deepest fulfilment.

